

News Release
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FARM TO SCHOOL ALLOWING MASON COUNTY BUSINESS TO EXPAND

Like many of the students growing for Farm To School (FTS) programs in West Virginia, Danielle Foglesong is part of a farm family. But she's not just riding mom and dad's coattails. She has a plan of her own.

The \$4,000 or so she has earned over the past two years is paying her car insurance, which allows her to commute to Marshall University. She plans on transferring to WVU in the future where she can study animal and nutritional sciences. Her eventual goal is to work advising people on the best strategies for feeding show animals.

Her start working with FTS was the result of a program initiated by the Mason County Extension Agent.

"Rodney [Wallbrown] kind of came to dad and proposed the idea," said Danielle.

Wallbrown proposed a contest where 4-H and FFA students with the biggest FTS sales would receive a cash prize (above and beyond their cash receipts). Danielle finished second and got a prize, but she also recognized the larger potential of the program.

Her FFA teachers, Sam Nibert and Tim Kidwell, also encouraged her to participate in FTS by helping her get a small grant to get started.

Although it's not easy money, "It's a really good opportunity," said Danielle. "I got a new car, and so the deal was I pay for the insurance, so I've got my insurance covered."

The program itself has grown "quite a bit" in Mason County.

Danielle said she grew mainly tomatoes last year, but the melons she grew this year were more profitable. Plus, they were easier to grow and pick.

Danielle's dad, Dan Foglesong, said the family will be adding a second high tunnel beside the one they already have and the open, but well-fenced, plot they have for seasonal production. They also have another high tunnel next to their house. The high tunnels were in production all winter last year, and Dan says that's his plan for this winter as well.

The FTS program has "increased business quite a bit." In an agriculture-rich county such as Mason, Danielle is not alone as a young farmer. She knows others who have been and are involved in FTS, and the interest seems to be growing.

“I’ve got my boyfriend interested in it. He’s got some things in there [the high tunnel] right now,” she said.